

HHS' SAMHSA REPORT FINDS INHALANTS ARE DRUG OF CHOICE IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE—12 YEAR OLDS MORE LIKELY TO USE INHALANTS THAN CIGARETTES OR MARIJUANA

A new report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) says that inhalants trail only alcohol among the substances used by 12-year-olds to get high.

In fact, more 12-year-olds -- 7 percent of those surveyed -- said they have tried inhaling substances like gasoline and paint solvents for their intoxicating effects than have tried marijuana, cocaine, and hallucinogens combined.

Perceived risk of inhalant use has declined even as use rates have remained constant over the last few years, experts said. Inhalant use carries serious health risks, including brain damage and cardiac arrest.

Young people sniff products such as refrigerant from air conditioning units, aerosol computer cleaners, shoe polish, glue, air fresheners, hair sprays, nail polish, paint solvents, degreasers, gasoline or lighter fluids. Youngsters intentionally inhale these substances to get high. Most parents are not aware that use of inhalants can cause "Sudden Sniffing Death" - immediate death due to cardiac arrest - or lead to addiction and other health risks.

According to combined data from the 2006 to 2008 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs), 6.9 percent of 12 year olds have used an inhalant to get high or to make them feel good. This exceeds the rate of use of cigarettes, marijuana, hallucinogens, and cocaine, as well as the rate of nonmedical use of prescription drugs. Only alcohol had a higher rate of use. This same pattern was found among both girls and boys.

"Young people and their parents are key audiences for this important public information campaign about the clear and present dangers associated with inhalant abuse," said Gil Kerlikowske, Director of National Drug Control Policy.

"With data showing that young people often don't perceive the great risk of abusing inhalants, we must redouble our efforts to inform adolescents of the dangers and to encourage parents to be more vigilant in protecting their children from inhalants often present in common household products."

Inhalants are legal, everyday products—such as spray paints, glue, and gasoline—the vapors of which can be inhaled intentionally to get high. When used as intended, these products are harmless; however, when they are used as inhalants, they can be dangerous and even deadly.

"As a physician, I cannot stress enough the importance of educating adolescents about the dangers of the inhalation of volatile substances, known as huffing. Young people do not always realize the consequences of their actions," said Jennifer N. Caudle, D.O., an osteopathic family physician and director of the family medicine section of the Department of Internal Medicine at Sinai Hospital in Baltimore. "However, it is possible to die from trying inhalants even once. 'Sudden Sniffing Death' causes the heart to beat rapidly, which can result in cardiac arrest."

For a chart go to:

<http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2K10/inhalents/Spotlight001AdolInhalant.htm>

For more complete information, please go to:

<http://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/advisories/1003110303.aspx>

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